MONITORING, EVALUATION, LEARNING, AND INNOVATION UNIT

Assessment of Equity in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Exchange Programs

Internal Briefing: September 20, 2022

ECA Equity Assessment Objectives

Assessment Objectives

The overarching objectives of this assessment are to help guide ECA towards an Action Plan that will:

- Increase the participation of racial and other minorities from underrepresented groups in the United States in ECA educational and exchange programs; and

- Increase the number of minority-focused communities and institutions that are underrepresented as U.S.-based hosts to foreign visitors in those same educational and exchange programs.

Assessment Questions

1. How do different American audiences access and experience equity related to ECA programs? This includes:
   - American exchange participants who go abroad to study in secondary school, higher education, or professional training contexts
   - American experts who speak/mentor/teach/perform for foreign audiences abroad
   - American host families and/or community programs who engage with ECA's foreign students

2. What are the (formal or informal) diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) policies and objectives of ECA programs?
   - Who sets and leads those policies across exchanges and/or at the individual program levels? (ECA, Implementing partners, hosts, etc.)
   - How does ECA measure progress and/or success in making programs more diverse, equitable and inclusive?

Assessment Questions, cont.

3. What does the published literature on educational and exchange programming tell us regarding: 1) broader trends of minority participation in such programs and 2) facilitators and barriers to participation of underrepresented groups and, 3) retention, experience, and alumni engagement of diverse and underserved participants?

4. What insights do ECA program alumni and non-participants from underrepresented groups offer in terms of the barriers and facilitators to enrollment and retention of more participants like themselves?

5. What insights do representatives of partner and non-partner institutions with international exchange programs (including minority serving institutions [MSIs]) and IPs offer around their philosophy and approach to DEI in their programs and relevant retention challenges or best practices about engaging and diversifying American participants and host communities?

The Equity Landscape at ECA

ECA Bureau Diversity Statement

"The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the United States

Department of State strives to ensure that its efforts reflect the diversity

of U.S. society and societies abroad. The Bureau seeks and encourages the

involvement of people from traditionally underrepresented audiences in

all its grants, programs and other activities and in its workforce and

workplace. Opportunities are open to people regardless of their race,

color, national origin, sex, age, religion, geographic location, socioeconomic status, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity.

The Bureau is committed to fairness, equity and inclusion."

DOS/ECA Structures Related to DEI Policy
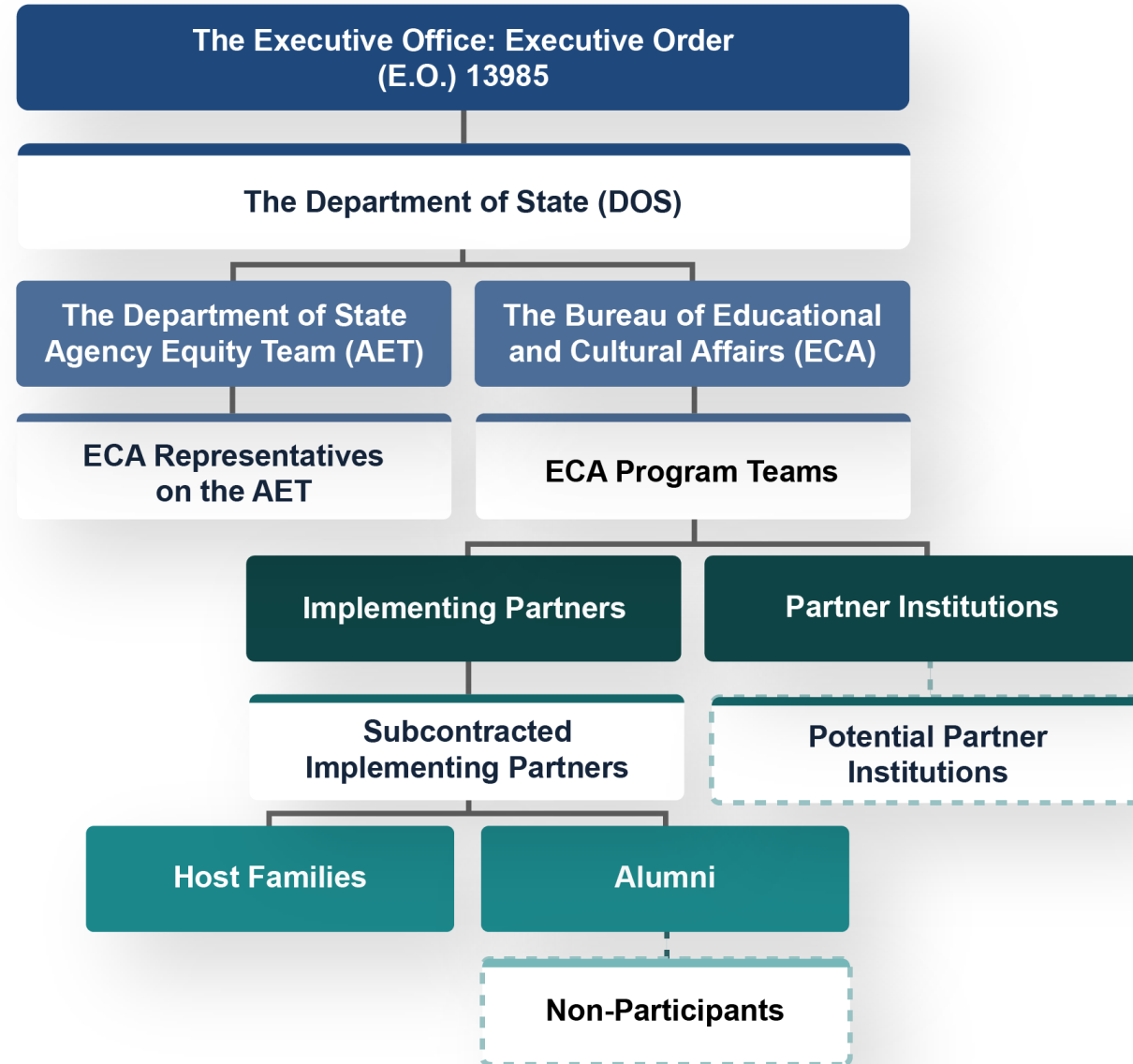
ECA Current DEI Practices

- Targeted outreach/recruitment of economically-disadvantaged Americans (e.g., teacher exchange programs, Gilman undergraduates)

- Working with institutions (academic, professional, media outlets, etc.) with diverse constituencies to promote exchange programs

- Working with minority serving institutions (MSIs) to promote exchange programs

- Slightly advantaging under-resourced institutions (including MSIs and community colleges) through the proposal scoring system

- Caps on the number of participants from any one university, including primarily white institutions (PWIs)

Considerations for an Equitable Program Lifecycle

1 Pre-program considerations, concerns, outreach, and promotion

2 The application process and participant selection

3 Orientation

4 Exchange

5 Post-program engagement

6 Feedback, monitoring, evaluation, and learning

Equity: The Pre-Program Stage

Equitable Program Lifecycle: Pre-Program Planning

THE PRE-PROGRAM STAGE

Structural Considerations	Socio-Cultural Considerations
• Funding Caps	• "Model Minority and Respectability Politics" Concerns
• Financial Aid Calendars	• Familial and Community Support
• Special Needs	• Impostor Syndrome
• Financial and Opportunity Costs	• Justifying Participation
	• Fear of the Unknown

Pre-Program: Structural Considerations

- Congressionally-mandated funding caps

- Program payment calendars don't always align with financial aid timing.

- A One-Size-Fits-All financial need equation doesn't account for potential participants with disabilities or other special needs that may increase their costs (e.g., ASL interpreter, special flight or residence accommodations, wheelchair accessibility, etc.)
    - IPs not able to budget flexibly or provide for disability services

- Length of programs

- Credits for study abroad that satisfy home (US) program requirements

- Assumptions about awareness of international travel requirements and documents, access to insurance, etc.

Priorities of Potential Exchange Participants and/or Host Families

Financial concerns

- How to pay for it?

- Will there be surprise costs? (e.g., passport and visa fees, excursion costs, purchasing items for participants, background checks, etc.)

Opportunity costs

- Missed work/job

- Potential for delayed graduation/completion of degree program

Socio-cultural aspects

- "Model minority" and "respectability politics" concerns

- Fit with other exchange participants arguably more important than fit with host culture

- Levels of familial and community support

- Feeling that an exchange program is attainable and "meant for them" (impostor syndrome)

- Instrumental justification for study abroad (to counteract the idea that it's something "frivolous" that affluent white people do)

- "Fear of the unknown" and particularly in how they'll be treated in the host country

Communicating With Potential Exchange Participants

More than just "reaching" potential participants

- Getting communications channels right is necessary but not sufficient

- Messages that resonate = speak to the priorities of potential participants while also allaying their fears, impostor syndrome, etc.

- Goal= underserved participants see the message and think "this program is for *me.*"

- The power of hearing from peers of the same identity cannot be overstated

Equity: The Application and Selection Process

Equitable Program Lifecycle: Application

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Key Findings

- Application processes may feel like a game, invasive, or full of insurmountable challenges.
- MSIs have varying and often limited capacity to provide application support and resources to students.
- Arbitrary selection criteria like GPA requirements can disproportionately and negatively impact underrepresented applicants.
- Applications should include built-in space for applicants who require special accommodations (e.g., for disabilities) to request them.

Perceptions of the Application Process

- Feels like "a game"

- Can feel invasive/intrusive or like applicants need to "play up" their disadvantage

- Seems unlikely to get a return on investment of time and effort

- Feels unattainable for those from less affluent backgrounds

Accessibility During the Application Process

- Potential participants at MSIs and Community Colleges may not have the same resources as counterparts at PWIs

- Smaller institutions may not have resources or staff to help potential participants navigate the application process

- Applicants with disabilities would benefit from being able to clearly describe accommodations they need in the application process

Barriers During the Application Process

- Number of application components (multiple essays, letters of recommendation, etc.)

- GPA requirements

- Application fees

- Language barriers in application materials and informational sessions

Equity: The Orientation Process

Equitable Program Lifecycle: Orientation

EQUITABLY BUILDING PRE-PROGRAM ORIENTA-TIONS AND ONBOARDING

Key Findings

- Safety-related fears vary between underrepresented identities.
- Allaying family members' fears may positively impact an applicant's decision to participate.
- Providing identity-specific international travel resources helps underrepresented participants feel more supported.
- Cultural competency workshops may reduce inter-cohort discrimination.
- Building relationships between underrepresented participants and affinity groups in the destination country adds another layer of support.

Pre-Departure Safety Concerns

- Many safety concerns relate to a fear of the unknown

- Family members' (particularly for first generation students/travelers) often have concerns

- Some concerns are specific to participants' identities in relation to the destination country

Allaying Pre-Departure Safety Concerns

Workshops

- Preparatory workshops for *all* participants that explore cultural issues (both between Americans and for Americans from diverse backgrounds going abroad)

Peer-to-Peer Connections

- Affinity groups and mentoring relationships with alumni of the same identity
  - Mitigate fears around possible discrimination
  - Provide participants with an opportunity to learn strategies for handling identity-related situations during their exchange experience.

Pre-Departure Orientation

Considerations for orientation

- Post-acceptance orientation session to cover time-sensitive topics

- Host country and identity considerations

- Minority identity alumni speaking or presenting at orientation sessions for *all* participants

Equity: While American Participants Are on Exchange Abroad

FACTORS IMPACTING UNDERREPRESENTED EXCHANGE PARTICIPANTS WHILE ABROAD

Obstacles While Abroad	Mitigating Obstacles
• Being perceived as "not American" based on appearance • Needing to hide or obscure identities for safety • Discrimination or segregation within cohorts • Limited contextual support	• Building true resilience, and not endurance, through contextual support systems • Prioritizing what resources, orientation topics, preparation, and in-country support participants know they have access to • Having defined lines of contact for in-country mental health and logistical supports

Challenges that Exchange Participants Face Abroad

Identity-related challenges

- Perceptions of who "looks" American

- Need to hide or obscure ones identity

Discrimination

- Discrimination from others in the exchange program cohort

- Discrimination from those in the host country

Accessibility

- Reactive (rather than proactive) special accommodations for participants with disabilities can hamper or even cut short their exchange experience

Support and Resilience Go Hand-in-Hand

- Define "resilience" and articulate what helps to build it

- Clearly delineate what counts as an acceptable level of "being out of ones comfort zone"

- Support can come in many forms and often does not mean "fixing" problems for participants

Psychological Support for Exchange Participants

- Having someone from a shared identity to talk to while abroad

- Being able to communicate in their native language with peers during language immersion

- Working with IPs to identify virtual mental health support services for students to utilize while abroad

- Focusing on prevention of psychological crises

- Having clear avenues for participants to request support on the ground

- Consider the potential to create collaboration with minority communities in the host country as a potential resource for minority exchange program participants.

Equity: Post-Program Engagement

Equitable Program Lifecycle: Post-Exchange

ENGAGING UNDERREPRESENTED EXCHANGE PARTICIPANTS POST-PROGRAM

Engagement Directly After Returning to the United States

- Mitigating culture shock
- Having a backup plan for cancelled or delayed exchanges
- Strengthening re-entry workshops for resume and career building

Engaging Underrepresented Alumni

- Alumni generally want to be program ambassadors, but may not have the financial means to do so without compensation.
- Collaborate with institutional contacts to provide platforms for the impact stories of underrepresented participants on campuses and in marketing.

Equity: Feedback, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

Equitable Program Lifecycle: M&E/Learning

MONITORING AND EVALUATION FOR DEIA

Key Findings

- Some partner organizations do not have processes and mechanisms to manage DEIA data collection.
- Others collect more DEIA-related data than RFPs require, but do not currently share it with ECA.
- IPs and Partner Institutions desire two-way comunication with ECA about M&E best practices.
- Operationalizing DEIA necessitates concrete and measurable M&E indicators.
- Many MSIs utilize creative qualitative methodology or data collection tools to manage M&E to overcome low staff bandwidth.

Q&A

Appendix I: Methodology

Literature Review

- DCG completed a comprehensive literature review of both peer-reviewed and grey literature focusing on educational and exchange programs.

- Various benchmarking tools were identified that iterated on the Inclusive Excellence Guidelines set by the Association of American Colleges and Universities. Each tool was individualized to determine the equity of study abroad programs for underrepresented identity groups like Black African American students and students with disabilities (Sweeney, 2013; Johnstone and Edwards, 2019).

  - These case studies served as a model for the types of questions that can glean information on the equity of institution-based exchange programs. Other case studies selected highlighted some of the best practices that emerged from the literature such as collecting identity specific qualitative data from study abroad students (Schmidt, 2010), which also informed the development of this assessment's primary data collection instruments.

Literature Review, cont.

Example search terms:

Exchange program diversity	Exchange program diversity and inclusion	Government exchange program diversity	Government exchange program diversity and inclusion	Cultural exchange programs diversity
Study abroad diversity	Study abroad diversity and inclusion	Barriers to study abroad participation	Barriers to cultural exchange program participation	Equity in study abroad recruitment
Equitable educational exchange programming	Diversity and equity in data collection	Barriers to inclusivity in study abroad implementation	Best practices in promoting equity in study abroad	Discrimination in study abroad
Racism in study abroad	Sexism in study abroad	Study abroad accessibility	Black / African American study abroad	Asian American study abroad
Latino study abroad	Discrimination in study abroad host communities in the US	Short term academic exchange discrimination	Professional exchange discrimination	Vocational exchange discrimination

In-Depth Interviews

- DCG conducted in-depth supply- and demand-side interviews virtually via Zoom with 71 individuals, each lasting between 60 and 90 minutes.

Interview Cohort	Total Interviewees
ECA Internal	7 (2 AET, 5 Programs)
ECA Implementing Partners	16
Current Partner	10
Potential Partner	4
Host Family Members ("Parents")	7 (some IDIs, one group discussion)
ECA Exchange Program Alumni	27
Total	71

Focus Groups

- DCG facilitated 6 focus groups comprising 30 total participants with individuals representing underrepresented groups who had never participated in a study abroad or international exchange program.
  - Deaf Students for whom American Sign Language is a first language (conducted in ASL)
  - Black / African Americans
  - First-Generation to Travel Abroad
  - Community College Students
  - Gay Males
  - Muslim Americans

Appendix II: Demographics and Breakdown of Cohorts

ECA Program Representation in the Interviews

ECA Program Interview Representation	Number of Alumni Interviewees	Number of Program Team Interviewees
Gilman	7	1
IDEAS	0	1
Critical Languages	5	1
Global UGRAD	0	1
FLTA	0	1
Sports Envoy	1	0
Fulbright	10	0
CBYX	4	0
Total	27	5

Institutional Types in the IP and Partner Interviews

IP, Partner, and Potential Partners by Institutional Type	Number of Interviewees
Community College	4
Historically Black Colleges and Universities	5
Hispanic-Serving Institutions	2
Asian and Pacific Islander Serving Institutions	2
Non-Profit Organizations	13
Disability Serving University (Gallaudet)	1
Catholic University	1
Underrepresented State University	2
Total	30

Minority Identities in the Host Family Interviews

Host Family Minority Identities Represented	Number of Host Family Interviewees
Black / African American	3
Hispanic / Latino	2
Asian American	2
Total	7

Recruitment Summary: Host Families

Six participants represented the following demographic criteria.

- Gender: Male (3); Female (3)

- Age: 36 (1); 37 (1); 39 (1); 44 (2); 56 (1)

- Race / Ethnicity: Asian / Pacific Islander (2); Black / African American (2); Hispanic / Latino (2)

- Education: Bachelor's degree (3); Master's degree (3)

- Pretax Income Per Year: $50-75k (1); $75-100k (1); $100-150k (1); >$200k (3)

Minority Identities in the Alumni Interviews

Alumni Minority Identities Represented	Number of Alumni Interviewees*
Black / African American	11
Hispanic / Latino	4
Native American	3
Asian American	5
Mixed Race	1
First-Generation student	4
Person with Disabilities	3
LGBTQ+	2
Pell Grant Recipient	7
Community College Student	2
* Some interviewees had multiple minority identities so that the total here exceeds the number of interviews held with this cohort (27).	

Minority Identities in the Focus Groups

Focus Group Minority Identities Represented	Number of Participants
Students who are Deaf	3
Black / African Americans	6
First-Generation to Travel Abroad	5
Community College Students	4
Gay Males	6
Muslim Americans	6
Total	30

Focus Group Recruitment Summary: Students who are Deaf

Three participants represented the following demographic criteria.

- Gender: Male (1); Female (2)

- Age: 23 (1); 25 (2)

- Race / Ethnicity: Asian / Pacific Islander (1); Hispanic / Latino (1); White / Caucasian (1)

- Education: Bachelor's degree (2); Master's degree (1)

- Pretax Income Per Year: <$25k (1); $25-50k (1); Prefer not to respond (1)

Focus Group Recruitment Summary: Black / African Americans

Six participants represented the following demographic criteria.

- Gender: Male (3); Female (3)

- Age: 23 (1); 24 (1); 25(1); 26 (2); 29 (1)

- Race / Ethnicity: Black / African American (6)

- Education: GED (1); Bachelor's degree (5)

- Pretax Income Per Year: <$25k (1); $25-50k (2); $50-75k (2); $75-100k (1)

Focus Group Recruitment Summary: First Generation to Travel Abroad

Six participants represented the following demographic criteria.

- Gender: Male (3); Female (3)

- Age: 23 (1); 26 (1); 27 (2); 28 (1); 29 (1)

- Race / Ethnicity: Hispanic / Latino (2); Middle Eastern (1); White / Caucasian (3)

- Education: Vocational degree (1); Bachelor's degree (3); Master's degree (1); Post-Graduate degree (1)

- Pretax Income Per Year: $25-50k (1); $50-75k (4); $150-200k (1)

Focus Group Recruitment Summary: Community College Students

Six participants represented the following demographic criteria.

- Gender: Male (2); Female (4)

- Age: 19 (2); 21 (1); 24 (1); 25 (1); 26 (1)

- Race / Ethnicity: Hispanic / Latino (4); White / Caucasian (2)

- Education: GED (6)

- Pretax Income Per Year: <$25k (4); $25-50k (2)

Focus Group Recruitment Summary: Gay Males

Five participants represented the following demographic criteria.

- Gender: Male (5)

- Age: 23 (1); 26 (1); 29 (1); 31 (2)

- Race / Ethnicity: Hispanic / Latino (2); White / Caucasian (3)

- Education: GED (2); Some College (1); Bachelor's degree (2)

- Pretax Income Per Year: <$25k (3); $25-50k (2)

Focus Group Recruitment Summary: Muslim Americans

Six participants represented the following demographic criteria.

- Gender: Male (3); Female (3)

- Age: 23 (2); 24 (1); 29 (1); 30 (2)

- Race / Ethnicity: Asian / Pacific Islander (2); Black / African American (2); Indian (1); White / Caucasian (1)

- Education: Bachelor's degree (5); Master's degree (1)

- Pretax Income Per Year: $25-50k (2); $50-75k (1); $75-100k (1); $100-150k (1) $150-200k (1)